



# What's my yard tree worth?

Homeowners often wonder about the value of their trees when removals appear necessary or when a tree in their yard has suffered damage at the hands of a contractor, neighbor or storm. These types of landscape losses may be particularly heartfelt when we have attached sentimental value to a particular tree or group of trees.

From a homeowner's view, landscape trees, whether pine or hardwood, seem to occupy such a large space in the landscape that it's hard to imagine they can't be worth thousands of dollars. The reality is that we often over-value our trees. Our need to find resolution for the damage may reflect our sense of loss, not the tree's true value. In some cases, if structurally unsound, our beloved trees can have a negative value.

The Council of Tree and Landscape Appraisers (CLTA) has developed a methodology for assessing the value of landscape trees, which has become commonly accepted as a reasonable way to account for the value of a tree based upon its contribution to the landscape. The CLTA's "Guide for Plant Appraisal" calculates tree value by four general methods:

- Replacement Cost
- Trunk Formula
- Cost of Repair
- Cost of Cure

Individual situations dictate the best method to be applied, ranging from the "Replacement Cost" method (what it would cost to replace the plant) to the "Cost of Cure" method, which is an attempt to make the owner "whole" again. Generally, each method's assessment is based upon the species rating, the type of land use, the condition of the plant before impact, location in the landscape, and its contribution to the overall value to the entire landscape. Specially trained appraisers, usually International Society of Arboriculture (ISA) certified arborists, conduct plant and tree appraisals and employ these methodologies as part of their range of work. It should be noted that while the value of historic trees may be in the tens of thousands of dollars, it is rare for a yard tree to exceed a few thousand, even for perfectly placed, best quality trees.



Contrary to the belief that large landscape trees have great value as wood products once they have been removed, they most often do not. The presence of scaffolding branches and internal defects in the tree, as well as nails, screws, wire, fencing and yard art included within the bark, makes this wood unusable for lumber or furniture. This wood usually becomes recycled as firewood or mulch, unless there is a specialty wood mill close by. You may be able to locate one of these mills at <http://georgiaarborist.org/Urban-Wood-Reutilization>.

Finally, should your tree become damaged, it is recommended a certified arborist be contacted to review damage to the tree and determine how it will impact the tree's long term structure and health. If the tree is compromised beyond saving, then an appraisal of the tree's value may be in order.